I. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,172,900 to Uno et al.

Applicants submit that Uno et al. fails to disclose a sheet feeder having a direction detection unit which detects a change of a rotation direction of the separating member, and a separating force adjusting unit which stops the increase of the reverse rotation torque to maintain the reverse rotation torque when the direction detection unit detects reverse rotation of the separating member, as recited in claims 1 and 7. Further, Applicants submit that Uno et al. fails to disclose stopping the increase of the reverse rotation torque to maintain the reverse rotation torque when reverse rotation of the separating member has been detected as recited by claim 13.

Uno et al. discloses a paper feed mechanism for a printing device of the electrophotographic type having a paper passage detection portion 13 that is provided between the pickup roller 3 and the feed roller 4, and a paper passage detection portion 14 is provided downstream of the feed roller 4 (see col. 3, lines 21-25). The Patent Office cites col. 3, lines 25-28 in Uno et al. as allegedly disclosing a sheet direction detection unit (see page 2, paragraph 3 of Office Action). However contrary to the assertions of the Patent Office, col. 3, lines 25-28 in Uno et al. merely discloses that "a processor 16 receives outputs of the paper passage detection portions 13 and 14 via an I/O port 17, and also controls the stop position of the stepping motor 12 via a driver 18." Further, Uno et al. discloses that the paper sheet 1 is fed past the paper passage detection portion 13 by the feed roller 4 and the separation roller 5, and passes past the paper passage detection portion 14 (see col. 3, lines 44-48). Moreover, Uno et al. fails to make any other reference to any form of detecting any condition with respect to the separation roller.

The paper passage detection portions 13, 14 disclosed in Uno et al. merely provide data to the processor 16 relating to an amount of time that elapses for a sheet of paper to pass from the paper passage detection portion 13 to the paper passage detection portion 14. The paper passage detection portions 13, 14 disclosed in Uno et al. do not detect and are incapable of detecting a change in rotation direction of the separating member as specifically defined in claims 1, 7 and 13. Therefore, nowhere does Uno et al. disclose a direction detection unit which detects a change of a rotation direction of the separating member as required in claims 1 and 7. Moreover, nowhere does Uno et al. disclose stopping the increase of the reverse rotation torque to maintain the reverse rotation torque when reverse rotation of the separating member has been detected as required in claim 13.

In view of the foregoing, Uno et al. fails to disclose each and every limitation of independent claims 1, 7 and 13, and thus cannot anticipate claims 1, 7 and 13, or any of the additional features recited in the dependent claims thereof. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection are respectfully requested.

II. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-16 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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